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**MACEDONIA IN APRIL 2003.  
DIAGNOSIS: ‘CANCER WITH GALLOPING  
METASTASES’**

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## MACEDONIA IN APRIL 2003. DIAGNOSIS: 'CANCER WITH GALLOPING METASTASES'<sup>1</sup>

### *Methodology and Parameters of the Study*

This field study, conducted in the Republic of Macedonia from 30 March to 6 April 2003, was designed to establish the progress and stages in the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement, the state of interethnic relations, and the developments and changes in the contact zones where there are both Macedonians and Albanians. In addition, the object of the study was to identify Macedonia's political, economic and social prospects, as well as the attitudes of the two ethnic communities to the near future of Macedonia and of the Balkan region as a whole.

The fieldwork was carried out by a team of scholars specialized in Albanian Studies: an expert in Balkan history, a Balkan linguist, an archaeologist-anthropologist, a journalist specialized in Balkan affairs, and an interpreter-mediator.<sup>2</sup> The methods employed were anthropological interview, group interviews, and an adapted system of questionnaires combined with observations.

The study was conducted in Tetovo, Mala Recica, Skopje, Gostivar and Struga, and covered approximately 30 male and female respondents aged between 20 and 60. The respondents were Macedonian and Albanian members of the political elite, intellectuals, journalists, randomly selected urban and rural residents, and Muslim clerics.

### *Politics, Economy, Society: A Snapshot*

**Events and Politicians.** In spring 2003 Macedonia's former prime minister Ljubco Georgievski announced that he was resigning from the VMRO-DPMNE leadership and published a series of articles about the situation in the Republic of Macedonia. In a style of emotional analysis, irrespective of the obvious bitterness, dramatic exaggerations and partisan bias, the former VMRO-DPMNE leader formulated candidly the truth about the present state of relations between the two main ethnic communities and the future of Macedonia.

Georgievski voiced bleak truths – truths that everyone in the small country knows but is reluctant to admit even in private, and that are also very well known to international observers and peacekeeping missions, which likewise prefer to keep their real analyses and forecasts confidential.

In fact, perhaps what sounded most shocking was Georgievski's proposal for ending with protectorates, semi-protectorates, institutionally blocked states and experiments of all sorts, and convening a special Balkan conference to redraw the existing borders on the Balkans and to establish ethnically clean states. On the Balkans, where the inviolability of borders has been assigned cult status, and where the mere thought of their revision and exchange of population and property is tabooed this, admittedly, sounded too extreme. Simply because there have been too many historical precedents, which have inflicted wounds that are festering to this very day.

Moreover, the former prime minister took advantage of the Bulgarian Prime Minister's visit to Skopje in April to publish in his regular column in the *Dnevnik* daily 'Theses on the

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<sup>1</sup> This metaphor is from Ljubco Georgievski's article 'Агонијата на Балканот' ['The Agony of the Balkans'], in *Dnevnik*, March 21, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Antonina Zhelyazkova, Donka Dimitrova, Valeri Grigorov, Tanya Mangalakova and Alma Chaushi.

Survival of the Macedonian Nation and State,' where he called for more serious consideration of Macedonian academics' proposals for territorial and population exchange, separation of Macedonians and Albanians, and ethnic salvation of Kumanovo, Skopje, Kicevo and Struga.

The debate fired by Ljubco Georgievski's articles set the agenda of the political debates in March and April. The Socialists (SDSM) qualified the ex-prime minister's ideas as a 'typical case of anachronism,' whereas their partner Ali Ahmeti, leader of the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), called them 'alarming.' On the other hand, the Albanian opposition parties partly or fully supported the former prime minister. The leader of the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP), Abdurrahman Haliti, congratulated Georgievski on his 'courage to voice that which is on the mind of many people and which has been officially announced by the MASA' (Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts).

The leaders of the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), Xhaferri and Thaqi, partly supported Georgievski's projects, and readily expounded their new radical views to us because they are likewise in opposition: 'If we hadn't given up power, there could have been a civil war between the Albanians themselves.'

The problem with the ID cards of Albanians in Macedonia, which heightened tensions in the country during the dispute over whether they should be issued in Albanian, was criticized sharply by the Albanian opposition leaders: 'The SDSM and DUI made a big compromise by adopting the decision that the ID cards be issued in the Albanian language only at the card-holder's request. What's the point: we are a two-nation state and the future belongs to the two official languages. The Law on Amnesty was likewise vitiated by the amendments.' We asked a series of questions to find out precisely which provisions had vitiated the law. Our respondents from the DPA explained: 'All participants in the war, with the exception of those summoned by the Hague Tribunal, should have been amnestied. With the interference of the Macedonian secret services the formula prescribed by the Ohrid Agreement was revised and now no one is amnestied. We have young boys in prison who have been sentenced to 15, 10 or six years. The crisis and mistrust are being recycled.'

A female Macedonian MP from the SDSM is not optimistic about the cohabitation of the two ethnic communities: 'The Albanians identify themselves as victims only. They have a political and cultural problem with double standards. They don't want to accept that where they are a majority they must observe the same norms and relations that they are demanding for themselves where they are a minority. This doesn't even hold for the Macedonians only, but also for the Turks, the Roma, the Torbeshi and other ethnic groups. The obvious intolerance towards the Macedonians gives rise to scepticism about whether this is the end of their demands. The truth is that we are living as complete strangers in parallel worlds...'

**Divided Society.** Perhaps the estrangement and incompatibility between the two ethnic communities are most palpable in the educational system. Our fieldwork coincided with an endless and heated debate about segregation in schools, which was covered by all media. The prime target for criticism was Minister of Education and Science Azis Polozani from the DUI quota, a former MP from the PDP, who was accused of trying to 'ghettoize schools.'

We spoke with the Minister and he expounded his view about the educational disputes in Kumanovo: 'This is a typical post-conflict process, where emotions overcome common sense and stoke the mistrust between the communities. Besides, there are forces that are deliberately exploiting people's feelings. Students in Kumanovo are divided into groups and this reflects the division in society: the Albanians are on one side and the Macedonians are on the other. The media are accusing us of striving to establish ethnically clean schools, but that isn't true. Integration in the educational system is possible step by step only. At present we have the absurd situation in which Albanian and Macedonian students go to the same school

but are divided, the ones in one corner and the others in the other. The ones go to school in the morning and the others in the afternoon, doing their best to avoid each other. Are those really mixed schools – aren't they segregated schools in their own way?

An Albanian leader referred to another critical case in education to give us an example of the division in Macedonian society: 'For more than six months now there has been a dispute over a school in the village of Semsevo, near Tetovo. Eighty per cent of the residents there are Albanian and 20% are Macedonian. The school was called "Nikola Kalem" for years, but the Albanians have now renamed it after an Albanian hero. As a result the Macedonian students, supported by their parents, are refusing to attend the school in question, whereas the Albanians are insisting that it is their right to have the school named after an Albanian considering that the village is predominantly Albanian. No one will make concessions, the educational process is blocked and there are tensions.'

In Struga we spoke with two young Albanian girls, one in the 5<sup>th</sup> and the other in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and they told us the following: 'They are sisters, and they have a younger brother. Their parents have two bookshops in which, apart from stationery, there is Albanian literature only. The elder sister speaks Macedonian and plans to learn English too, because she wants to become a lawyer. There are 36 students in her class, all of them Albanian. There are no Macedonian students. They study history and geography in Albanian and have only one hour of Macedonian a week.'

Another highly controversial issue concerns the legalization of the Albanian university in Mala Recica, which has been operating illegally for more than eight years now. This university has been a source of political capital for all Albanian politicians over the years, and has on the whole invariably been the bone of contention that reflects all controversies between the Macedonian and Albanian communities. Over the years the university has produced hundreds of graduates whose university diplomas are not recognized anywhere and who cannot find a job on the basis of the education they have received there, while another several thousand are currently studying at the said university. At the political level, as well as within the government, there are lengthy disputes about the precise way of legalizing those diplomas, because the Albanians urgently need university graduates to fill the quotas at all levels of administration set by the Ohrid Agreement. Admittedly, our respondents from Macedonia's educated elite, irrespective of whether they are Macedonian or Albanian, were unanimous about the quality of education at the university in question: 'The quality of education is like that in the erstwhile *rabfaks* [lit. 'workers' faculties,' educational establishments from the period of early socialism set up to prepare workers and peasants for higher education]: upon graduation they are semi-literate but, on the other hand, politicized to the extreme.' The issue is so delicate that the OSCE and the Dutch Government have appointed a working group to consider the way in which the diplomas should be legalized.

Question from our team: 'Is it possible, by means of political and government resolutions, to mitigate confrontation, to reduce the spheres of division and marginalization?' Answer from an Albanian government official: 'We have no illusions that we can make people live in brotherly love, but they will have to resign themselves to the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement and the government resolutions because cohabitation and integration have no alternative.' Question: 'While travelling around the country we have seen many villages where people are completely divided. They are practically segregated, whereas the villages and regions are federated because people obviously feel more comfortable that way. How would you comment on this fact, which exists in real life and not in theory?' Answer: 'In a democratic society such as that in Macedonia people are free to choose their way of life. As power-holders we don't intend to create conceptually new people and a new way of life. Our purpose is to

create institutional mechanisms that are adequate to the social realities. If multiethnicity is a characteristic of a particular society, we must use institutions to avoid discrimination. And, besides, we must use the laws and their application to build an adequate environment for multiethnic cohabitation.'

We got a different answer from an Albanian politician from the opposition: 'On the Balkans there is disintegration of multiethnic states in which the three conditions for the functioning of the modern state are violated and not observed: loyalty of citizens, strong economy and liberal democracy. Those three factors are absent in part of the Balkan states. Bosnia is regarded as a multiethnic state. This is simply ridiculous: Bosnia is a zoo with different cages, there is no integration and all ethnic communities have been squeezed into their enclaves. It's the same in Kosovo: ethnically clean territories and barbed wire guarding the entities. On the Balkans there's hypocrisy: in theory, everyone is for multiethnic cohabitation but in practice everyone works for ethnically clean states. In all probability, this will be the fate of Macedonia too.'

The Macedonians and the Albanians have their own ways of marking their territory by demonstration of identity. For the Macedonians the ethnic markers are huge Orthodox crosses raised almost across the country, the largest one being a towering metal cross installed on Vodno near Skopje last summer. The Albanians strike back by means of the real demographic ethnic marker. All Albanian or mixed population centres are bustling with life and full of young people. Besides, people are building nonstop: huge Albanian houses, most of which have not been plastered yet but are full of people. Obviously for the moment this battle of identities is in the Albanians' favour, because the large crosses visible from kilometres look quite meaningless and helpless compared to the big houses and large families.

Macedonian bookshops are likewise assigned the mission of demonstrating identity: the window displays abound not so much in books as in bibles, crosses, flags and maps of Macedonia. The titles of the books are also of the most patriotic type. All taxis display smaller, but more often larger crosses on their windscreens. The crisis of Macedonian identity is depressing.

An Albanian official from the municipal administration in Struga answered our questions briefly: 'Albanians and Macedonians can live next to, but not with each other.' Whereas a Macedonian craftsman in the same town said: 'The goal of the Albanians is Greater Albania. Ahmeti is a common crook. The Albanians have money from emigration, prostitution and drugs. Our life is hard, we have nothing left. All bad things are their fault.'

That evening we had free conversations in an Albanian coffee-shop in Struga: 'Want to know what divides the Macedonians and Albanians? Everything: the language, culture, way of life, parents... Macedonians and Albanians don't know each other. As regards the Bulgarians, we hold them in high esteem, they read a lot and they are civilized. In Skopje I had fellow students from Bulgaria at the faculty of medicine – they used to read a lot. People who have been to Bulgaria say that the Bulgarians read constantly, even on the bus. Besides, the Bulgarians are hospitable: when an Albanian in Varna asked someone where he could buy bread, the guy handed him his own loaf and that was it, he didn't charge him anything... Sometimes, to taunt the Macedonians we deliberately tell them that the Bulgarians are by far smarter and more civilized, and they go mad...'

An Albanian intellectual added to the reflections on the vulnerable identity of the Macedonians: 'Macedonia has no traditions in statehood, no intellectual elite or political elite, and that's where the problems come from. Their identity is uncertain – they weren't Bulgarians. So what if you *are* Bulgarians? You used to be but no longer are. There's no need to Serbianize their language deliberately. I write in four languages and I find it hardest to write in

Macedonian, which is my second native language. Because it is made up, both phonetically and lexically. You can't build a state when you're afraid of everybody – of the Greeks, of the Bulgarians, of the Serbs, of the Albanians. Those who are afraid of the neighbours can't build a house.' After a complicated commentary on the quality of politicians in Macedonia, the respondent concluded as follows: 'You wanted to know why we're divided. Because the Macedonians say "that's our country" – which is very well, but that's my country too and I don't have any other. Albania is not my country. We want the same thing as they do, but it's impossible for us to come to an understanding. If it wasn't alarming it would have been comic because both peoples can fit into a single pocket' (i.e. are pocket-sized).

We heard something similar from the currently most popular Albanian political leader when we asked him 'how would he identify himself: as an Albanian from Macedonia, an Albanian from Yugoslavia, an Albanian from Western Macedonia, or simply as an Albanian?' His reply: 'My country is Macedonia. Here I have a grandfather and great-grandfather... Neither Albania nor Kosovo are my fatherland. There is one language: Albanian. We don't have problems in communicating, but Alma from your team wouldn't understand what my mother's saying because she speaks a dialect (our colleague comes from Tirana). There are also differences in the traditions and culture, but they aren't significant. We have three religions – Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims – but there have never been religious controversies among the Albanians, irrespective of their religion, because Albanianism is above all. I think Albania is like Germany, Kosovo is like Austria, while Macedonia is like Switzerland. There's nothing to stop anyone from having their own culture and traditions.'

In everyday life the passions of incompatibility flare up in fights on buses or in the streets, occasional torching of houses in villages – especially where they would like to stop displaced people from returning and to keep their villages ethnically clean<sup>3</sup> – or attacks on police patrols. It is usually Albanians who beat Macedonians, but sometimes it is the other way round.

A Macedonian respondent, a journalist, recounted the following story in horror even though he admitted that he had become radicalized himself: 'The victims are usually innocent people. In the centre of Skopje a group of Macedonians noticed a man in rubber boots, and because such boots are usually worn by Albanians, they beat him black and blue. It eventually turned out that the victim was Muslim. Shame on them! Shame also on those who torched mosques in Bitolja! This is the dark Macedonian side from the war. But there's also a dark Albanian side from the war.'

**The Ohrid Agreement: The Peace Treaty That Can Spark Another War.** All our discussions in Macedonia with politicians, intellectuals and members of the public – both Albanians and Macedonians – sooner or later boiled down to commentaries, reflections and disputes on the Ohrid Agreement.

The Ohrid Agreement consists of ten sections. The main principles underlying the fragile peace between the two large ethnic communities are several:

- Renunciation of the use of force for achievement of political goals;
- Building a multiethnic Macedonian society by extending the rights of the Albanians;
- Preserving the borders and territorial integrity of the Republic of Macedonia;

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<sup>3</sup> For the moment (April 2003), in Macedonia there are 8,000 displaced Albanians who have not yet returned to their homes, and 3,000 displaced Macedonians. People are returning in the Tetovo region, whereas in the Kumanovo-Lipkovo region and Aracinovo there are problems with their return because of the traumas of the war. The Macedonians are living in collective centres and are afraid to return. The Albanians are staying with relatives until their houses are repaired.

- Constitutional amendments declaring Albanian the second official language in municipalities with more than 20% Albanian population and allowing its use in Parliament, etc.

The Ohrid Agreement guarantees the Albanian minority, which according to the 1994 census comprises approximately 23% of Macedonia's population, proportional representation in the public administration, army and police. In essence, this Agreement must serve as a basis for an entire system of institutional changes designed to create a functioning multiethnic society in Macedonia.

We questioned all respondents about the results of the latest census, held in 2002. We were told by respondents even at the highest parliamentary and government level that the results were not ready yet and that they did not have the practice of taking a preliminary two-percent sample. The anticipation of the release of the census results, which we believe might be delayed because of strategic and tactical considerations, gives rise to significant tensions and various myths in society, e.g. that the Albanians have exceeded 40%. Depending on the respondents, this mythical percentage varied drastically up or down. An Albanian respondent from Struga said: 'I know the results for Struga only, because the census-takers are friends of mine. In the previous census in 1994 the Albanians in Struga and the municipality were 40%, but now in 2002 census they exceed 60%. There is probably a similar increase throughout Macedonia.'

It would be much more advisable to release preliminary data, thus bringing clarity and defusing tensions in society.<sup>4</sup>

In 2001-2002 the Albanian political leaders and the Albanian community as a whole were happy about the Ohrid Agreement, reached through the use of military force, their commentaries ranging from moderate to extremist: 'For the Albanians the Ohrid Agreement opens a broad opportunity for the actual federalization of Macedonia'; 'We have achieved more than we ever hoped for'; 'The Albanians will now have 4,000 policemen, 3,500 soldiers and officers, and more than 18,000 people in the public administration'; 'Ohrid has laid the beginning of the solution to the Albanian problem...' In 2002 the agreement was condemned only by the ANA (Albanian National Army), which identified as its goal the secession of Western Macedonia and its unification with Kosovo – a goal renounced as extremist by the legitimate Albanian factors.

On the whole, the Albanians were consolidated for the purpose of achieving their goals: to isolate the extremist elements and to motivate the Albanians to unite around legitimate Albanian political actors. On the very eve of the elections the Albanian bloc fell apart because partisan passions, personal hostilities and economic interests took the upper hand.

In the same period, except for some politicians and experts, the Macedonians as a whole regarded the Ohrid Agreement as 'capitulation, national treason, signed under pressure from the great powers': 'Ohrid did not seek a permanent solution to the problem but its postponement in time. This was the signing not of peace but of a truce.'

Two years later the attitudes to the Ohrid Agreement have been reversed. The Macedonians are trying to accept it and to adapt to its stipulations, offensive as some of them might be to their national pride. The public realizes that the resolutions and their implementation are in a sense 'the bad peace that is better than war.' Macedonian politicians and experts attribute the slow implementation of the Agreement to objective reasons: 'lack of

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<sup>4</sup> A Macedonian respondent cited a reporter from *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, according to whom the census was genuine and the Albanians did not exceed 20%. This figure seems unrealistic even to the most radical Macedonians, who think that the Albanians are 23%, the same as the published data from the 1994 census.

sufficient financial support, the small number of educated and qualified cadres among the Albanian community, escalation of the Albanian demands in contravention of the Agreement.’

Among the Albanian community, however, there is already an opinion that the Ohrid Agreement was an attempt to cheat them, that the new power-holders are deliberately resorting to demagoguery for the purpose of postponing the implementation of the provisions concerning equality, integration and more rights for the Albanians. We were repeatedly told by Albanians from all walks of life: ‘Our patience is running out, there will be a new war and this time it will be fought not for agreements but until the breakup of Macedonia or until the achievement of cantonization.’

Young Albanians from Gostivar, supporters of Ruzi Osmani in the 90s, recalled: ‘All of Macedonia [i.e. the Albanians] was for him. When he was arrested and we were beaten badly, we blocked Gostivar in his support.<sup>5</sup> Back then we weren’t ready for war and they crushed us easily.’ Question: ‘Did you take part in the NLA ( National Liberation Army) during the clashes in 2001? And would you fight again now?’ Answer: ‘Yes. We did and we are ready to do so again if necessary. The Ohrid Agreement is not being implemented, therefore in the new war we will demand Albanian cantons and such a development [cantonization] depends 90% on us. We will put up [with the present state of affairs] for another two or three years at the most.’ Question: ‘What do you think about a possible unification of Macedonia and Kosovo? Would you give your life for a united Albania?’ Answer: ‘That would be good, it’s normal for us to unite. I would fight for a united Albania with all my heart.’

The loss of confidence in the Ohrid Agreement intensifies radicalization among the Albanians, which is all too welcome for the commanders of the ANA or, as they are known among the Albanians - the newly emerged units of the AKS/ANA (Albanian National Army), which is operating on the territory of Kosovo too, as well as the difficulty to identify liberation division ‘Skanderbeg,’ whose traces lead to the village of Lipkovo. Part of the ANA leaders are campaigning for continuing the armed revolutionary struggle, and for new military offensives centred in Kicevo. The main political parties in Macedonia claim that the ANA’s supporters are too few to cause concern and that they are incapable of launching a large-scale military campaign.

Our team, however, registered growing discontent among the Albanian population, which creates favourable psychological readiness for inclusion in a new military offensive. The young men from Gostivar were extremely resentful about the fact that they had started ‘studying Albanian history only in the past two years, that until recently they hadn’t known anything even about Skanderbeg, that in population centres with an Albanian majority most signs are still in Macedonian, that the Macedonians, even when they are a minority in a given population centre, refuse to speak Albanian although they know the language, that they were university graduates but there were no jobs for them.’ In conclusion, our respondents in Gostivar declared: ‘We are ready for the war – we are waiting for orders!’

Our respondents suggested that the most reliable sign of whether there would or wouldn’t be a military offensive was the intensified collection of a 3% tax for the ‘Motherland Calls’ fund. The media claim and it is rumoured that the collection of the tax in question has intensified: the political front of the ANA, the Front for Integration of Albanians, had undertaken to collect the tax from the diaspora in Italy, every Albanian passenger of the air

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<sup>5</sup> As mayor of Gostivar Ruzi Osmani was the first Albanian politician to hoist an Albanian flag and he was arrested in July 1997. At present Osmani teaches at the University of Tetovo and is a very authoritative figure in the Albanian community.



carrier SWISS AIR made his or her 3% contribution to the Albanian cause before take-off or landing, etc.

Respondents said that the new Albanian politician and former ANA commander Ali Ahmeti had travelled to Switzerland at the beginning of the year to persuade the elders from the mythical underground strategic Albanian national centre to restore their confidence in him, to persuade them that he had not made big compromises and that he was not a 'collaborationist,' as well as to refrain from launching the military offensive precipitately in late spring 2003.

It is already known that after the experience acquired in 2001, Macedonia has been divided into four operational zones with five military formations to be deployed in the villages of Poroj (central command), Stribinovo, Papradiste, Belica, Lojane and Sipkovica. The names of the new strategists are pronounced with respect: Ekrem Mustafa and Kudri Veseli. We are left with the impression that there already is an operational action, but that its execution may be expected only when there is a serious occasion for that. The Albanian political leaders demonstrate a high level of adaptability and react depending on the current political situation.

A graffiti in Skopje also suggests what the expectations are: 'Branco – Ahmeti – Greater Albania.'

### *Clericalization of Albanians or Political Use of Religion?*

We asked an Albanian politician and philosopher the following: 'In view of the war in Iraq, which we are witnessing at the moment, and the tensions in Macedonia, please tell us something about religion and Albanians.' Answer: 'Iraq has confused our Albanian positions considerably. Even Kosovo has lost its charm for the international community and the people there must now resign themselves to the fact that they are a common backwater province. As regards religions, especially Islam in relation to the Albanians, we must realize that intensive processes of clericalization in the world are coming to an end and that they are associated with globalization. In the globalized world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is no place for our petty ethnic disputes. Boundaries will be drawn on a large scale, outlined by the big religions, and everybody must choose which side to take. Us Albanians are in a weak position, because culturally we belong to three religious denominations. Eventually all empty niches in the Albanian communities will be filled by means of clericalization. This could divide us.'

We chanced precisely upon such division among the Albanians in Tetovo when we went to interview people in the Bektashi centre Arabati Baba *Tekke*. Before we realized what was actually going on, we were pleasantly surprised by the excitement around and in the *tekke*. We told each other that peace is peace regardless, and that its positive impact had promptly increased the activity of worshippers. We quickly realized that we were wrong when we heard the voice of a muezzin rising from the interior of the *tekke* which, according to the tenets of mystic Sufism, is neither a mosque nor has a minaret or calls for prayer. This did not stop large groups of worshippers from lining up on the long narrow terrace of the *tekke* or from filling the hall for ritual contemplation, ready for prayer. They did this five times a day, as one of the *dervishes* explained to us. We were obviously witnessing the takeover of the *tekke* by the Sunnis, above whose gate the flag of the feast *Nevruz* (celebrated throughout the month of *Muharrem* to mark the advent of spring) was still flying, with the typical of the Bektashi Order white 12-pointed star with a green ritual Bektashi cap in the centre.

We asked the *Baba* of the *tekke* about the problem with the Sunnis: 'They occupied the sanctuary seven months ago, in August. The mufti's office sent its guards, primitive people who are armed and harass me and the *dervishes* in the monastery, as well as the worshippers who come from all over the country. Some of them have travelled a day or two to take part in

our rituals, but they are threatened with weapons, their way is blocked, and they don't muster the courage to come in for the rituals.'

According to the records and the numerous historical and cultural anthropological studies conducted to date, this is one of the oldest and largest religious sanctuaries on the Balkans, which was built in the Ottoman period and has belonged to the mystic Sufis from the Bektaşî Order for centuries. The Law on Denationalization of Property in Macedonia has not yet entered into force in the case of this particular *tekke*, although the lawyers of the Order have been negotiating with the authorities for almost four years now. The *Baba* thinks that the Sunni Muslims might have occupied the *tekke* to assert a *status quo* once denationalization proceeds.

The *Baba*, his *dervişes*, and the women caring for the *tekke* were all upset, especially after the brutes in the *tekke* courtyard threatened us with weapons too: 'In Macedonia there is no rule of law, no one comes to throw out those primitive folks, the institutions are not doing anything. At present a kind of primitivism with no precedent in any Balkan land reigns supreme.' We still want to know what kind of people are these – people with whom even we who are professionally trained to talk with every human being are incapable of engaging in dialogue and are on the verge of being lynched: 'Those are remainders of the UCK (NLA), not of the fighters who fought in the mountain but of those who came towards the end to loot and plunder. In 2001 they looted the *tekke* and torched the hotel. They have now opened a coffee-shop in the *tekke*. They don't drink alcohol because they pretend to be Muslim fanatics, but they do other evil things. Islam has remained a primitive faith. At present in Macedonia there are Wahhabites, they can also be found in Albania and in Kosovo, but the official Muslim religious community does not distance itself from them. It tacitly supports them.'

The *Baba*, as well as his *derviş* followers, are especially shocked by the substitution and contempt for the philosophy and meaning of the rituals: 'The *tekke* is for Bektaşî rituals, not for mosque rituals. Only Bektaşî participate in the mystic rituals, they alone are qualified to participate in the "*meta*" prayer. This is not a mosque, and there is no mihrab and actually the Sunnis break all their rules. In our philosophy it is important to have eye contact – we pray face to face, and not behind one another as they do.'

Bektaşî from Gostivar who were on a pilgrimage came to bid the *Baba* farewell. They kissed his palm and he told each one '*eyvallah*,' which could be translated as 'reverence.' We promptly asked him why they were kissing the *şeyh*'s palm: 'How observant you are,' he laughed good-naturedly. 'This means that the worshippers respect my soul, the beauty and purity within me, and not the external, not appearances.'

We were rescued from the armed guards, on whom we stumbled in the *tekke*, by a police inspector whom the *Baba* called by phone. The inspector on duty was Albanian, he walked us to the car and guaranteed that we would be alright. We, however, were amazed that he did not even take down the names of the armed brutes who had laid siege to the holy place, screaming at and threatening the *dervişes*. But he did take down our passport data.

In the next few days we asked all politicians and ministers whom we met to take care of the *tekke* as a cultural monument and of the life of the *Baba*, because we realized that greed and the desire to impose a form of religious extremism had placed the *şeyh* and the Bektaşî Order and its *dervişes* at enormous risk. All promised half-heartedly, and some even made a note to take measures.

Friends of ours, Albanian and Macedonian intellectuals, told us: 'Don't expect anyone to help the *Baba*. This is a dispute over significant property and no one will interfere; they will seize everything that belongs to the Bektaşî Order. Besides, this dispute involves covert political interests and a struggle for superiority.'

It became entirely clear to us that the struggle of the *dervişes* and the *şeyh* is doomed in advance. Perhaps the Albanian houses of worship in Macedonia should be guarded by the APCs of the multinational forces, just like the Serb monasteries and churches in Kosovo. The only difference is that here they need protection against their own kind, i.e. the Albanians.

Most of our Macedonian respondents were indifferent to what was going on, and a large part did not even know about this economic-religious dispute even though they were from Tetovo: 'This is an internal Albanian affair and we needn't interfere. That's the kind of people they are – there's nothing holy for them as you've seen for yourselves...'

All Albanian politicians without exception claimed that the Albanians have always been united and that there couldn't possibly be religious disputes among them. They tried hard to persuade us that the dispute was 'commercial only, and certainly not religious.' Our conclusion is clear: as long as it brings certain gains, be they political or commercial, the Albanian politicians and official Muslim community would not hesitate to use extreme Islamic instruments to achieve their goals.

The Bektāşi *tekke* in Tetovo is a true oasis of spiritual peace and calm, of tolerance, goodness and contemplation and, most importantly, it believes in and advocates a philosophy of non-aggression, it condemns aggression and respects every individual, other cultures and outlooks. In Macedonia there is obviously no place for a worldview that affirms universal humane values. That is precisely why during the communist regime the *tekke* functioned semi-legally, whereas in the 90s, when Macedonia took pride in its newly acquired independence, on the *tekke* premises there were restaurants and pubs in which drunken wedding guests fired guns. Then came 2001, and armed vandals used the *tekke* alternatively as police or ANA headquarters, until they finally desecrated and looted it. The time has now come to dispossess the peaceful Bektāşi Order of the *tekke*, thus obliterating all traces of one of the invaluable religious monuments of understanding on the Balkans.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Macedonians*

The Macedonians are suffering from apathy and scepticism. Compared to last year, when they grieved and complained about the Ohrid Agreement, or hoped for revenge – even military revenge, today the indifference of the doomed prevails. The Macedonians harbour no illusions: they are patiently enduring the implementation of the Agreement because whatever it might be, it offers hope that the ethnic conflict might be overcome. At the same time, it is clear to everybody that the Albanian demands will escalate and periodically destabilize the country. It is also obvious that the Agreement might also serve as a good excuse for a new military offensive, when a decision for launching such an offensive is taken on the grounds that its provisions are being violated or that its implementation is being delayed deliberately.

The Macedonians also feel uncomfortable on the foreign policy plane, i.e. in relation to the neighbours: with Greece they are still disputing the name of the country; with regard to Bulgaria there is an, albeit hidden, identity complex about the historical legacy and language; with Serbia relations are extremely strained because of the problem of the independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church; with Kosovo they have constant problems concerning the border, as well as concerning control over people trafficking and smuggling.

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<sup>6</sup> Arabati Baba *Tekke* was built and extended from 1773 to 1854. Numerous travellers and Orientalists have described the *tekke* as an architectural and spiritual achievement: the French traveller Ami Boué, the German scholar V.W. Hasslück, the Turkish scholars and travellers E. Ayverdi and N. Bilmenoglu, and many others. The *tekke* was renowned for one of the richest libraries in this part of the Balkans: philosophy, religion, poetry, music, literature. Today the *tekke* in Tetovo is the largest surviving architectural complex of its kind on the Balkan Peninsula.

A respondent who is a junior aide in the ruling political party said: 'Life shows that the Macedonians and the Albanians have lived separately both before and after the war. We are now witnessing ethnic differentiation and capsulation: Macedonians are being driven out of the regions with a compact Albanian population. Macedonians are selling their houses and moving eastwards. It is a pure illusion to assume that a multiethnic Macedonia is possible in practice.'

A young activist from the opposition VMRO-DPMNE expounded his own view: 'A large part of the blame for the crisis with the Albanians lies with the President, who behaved as a nongovernmental organization rather than as head of state. He did not send the army against the terrorists, whereas the police were inadequately trained and weak. Us people from the two main parties succumbed to partisan passions instead of working together to deal with the crisis. We should have united against the Albanian aggression, but it didn't work out because all the ex-communists cared about was our failure and they deserted, pouring scorn on us. Now it is impossible for the SDSM and VMRO to unite against the Albanians, who will naturally demand more and more. Their purpose is not to defend human rights but to separate Western Macedonia so that they can live by their own rules, which rules are to live against the law.'

According to a respondent who works for the International Organization for Migration, women trafficking and transiting is hardest to control precisely in the regions in Western Macedonia with compact Albanian populations.

Police are incapable of conducting operations there for fear not to provoke some tension among the Albanian majority and that is why the presence of enslaved girls from Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Albania and elsewhere cannot be controlled or restricted. The victims of trafficking who have ended up in this part of the country have little if any chance of being rescued and transferred to rehabilitation centres or repatriated, as is done periodically in other parts of Macedonia.

### *Conclusions*

For objective reasons the field diary on Macedonia in spring 2003 is shorter than the previous ones. That is because this time the team, which has been following the developments in Kosovo and Macedonia for five years now, did not register manifold opportunities, individual and public plans and prospects that could be analyzed, discussed and used as a basis for a constructive policy.

For the first time the scholars on the team – who are in principle trained to identify all overtones, to hear the voices of even the most marginal strata, to analyze projects on the future developed by eccentric intellectuals and scandalous politicians, and not to miss the opportunity of building realistic but also optimistic theories about the future – were confronted with a black-and-white snapshot of society in Macedonia:

1. The Macedonians have developed fatalistic attitudes and have sunk into apathy: there is no longer any patriotic fervour, or hope for an optimistic future as a nation and state. In fact, the Macedonian public is already becoming used and reconciled to the federalized structure of the territory, as well as of political, economic and public life in the country.

Among the Macedonian public there is widespread demographic, political, geopolitical and economic pessimism. The Macedonians feel that, in all spheres, they are gradually being ousted in an unknown direction.

Psychologically, the outside observer is left with the impression that the Macedonians have distanced themselves from their own country and from everything that is happening in and to it, as well as to them as individuals and communities. They are as if watching themselves from the sidelines, expecting the final result.

2. The Albanians are self-confident, their life is normal, calm and optimistic. They are in no doubt that the future is theirs. They are advancing slowly but surely in all spheres of life: demographic, political, economic and social.

The Albanians no longer hesitate to declare that Macedonia is their motherland and that they have no other. They are calmly expecting a certain type of decisions from their leaders, politicians and centres abroad – they are ready for peace and they are also ready for war. They are ready to work hard, but they are also ready to take part in trafficking. They are ready to live in their places of birth divided regionally, and they are ready, if necessary, to cooperate for unification of different territories populated by their compatriots. The Albanians are very young and are in a constant state of readiness.

3. The most unexpected conclusion that we had to make after our fieldwork in Kosovo and Macedonia was that on the Balkans at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century natality is just as effective as a weapon as biological weapons.

All respondents, friends or colleagues we spoke with invariably brought up the subject of high birth rates or negative growth rates. The subject of natality or the absence of natality haunted us throughout our travels. *This* is the factor that will change the Balkans (including borders) in the next five to ten years, and probably this is a factor that will also change Europe and the US.

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